



FOUNDATIONS OF A TRAUMA-INFORMED CARE APPROACH

Trauma-Informed Care (TIC) is different from other models of care because it can be used in any type of service setting or organization. It can also be utilized to address the effects of trauma not only for persons served, but also for staff and the organization.

How can agencies become trauma-informed?

TIC acknowledges that understanding a youth or family's life experience and how that may be impacting their current behaviors and functioning is key to potentially improving engagement and outcomes. To be successful, trauma-informed care must be adopted at the organizational and clinical levels.

- All people at all levels of the organization or system have a basic **realization** about trauma and understand how trauma can affect families, groups, organizations, and communities as well as individuals.
- People, staff and volunteers in the organization or system are also able to **recognize** the signs of trauma.
- The program, organization, or system **responds** by applying the principles of a trauma-informed approach to all areas of functioning.
- A trauma-informed approach seeks to **resist re-traumatization** of residents as well as staff.

Key Components in Implementing Trauma-Informed Care

- **Organizational Assessment** - Conducting an initial organizational assessment helps to create a baseline of competencies and regularly reassess the organization for improvement.
- **Paradigm Shift** - Practicing TIC requires a significant paradigm shift away from how "we've always done things" and traditional approaches. It's not a one-time implementation.
- **Safety** - One of the most important foundational principles TIC is creating a safe environment for those you serve and all who work at your organization.
- **Wellness and Self-Care** - The organizational culture needs to be one of overall wellness and self-care, not just of the people served but all employees, supervisors, and volunteers as well.
- **Everyone Is Included** – TIC isn't a clinical intervention, it's an approach to every element of an agency and involves all staff. If implementation of a trauma-informed approach involves direct care or clinical staff only, the agency isn't truly trauma-informed.

ORGANIZATIONAL PRACTICES

- **Policy:** Agency policies reflect trauma-informed care.
- **Training and Workforce Development:** Staff, volunteers and others receive initial and ongoing trauma and secondary stress training.
- **Trauma Screening:** Agency has timely trauma-informed cross-cultural screening available and accessible.
- **Trauma Assessment for Treatment Services:** Agency has timely trauma-informed cross-cultural assessment available and accessible.
- **Leadership and Governance:** Agency structure supports a Trauma Informed Approach.
- **Evaluation/Progress Monitoring/Quality Assurance:** There is a system in place that monitors the agency's progress in becoming trauma-informed.
- **Physical Environment:** The physical environment promotes a sense of safety, calming, and de-escalation for youth and staff.
- **Financing:** The agency's budget includes funding support for ongoing training on trauma and trauma-informed approaches for leadership and staff development.
- **Cross-sector Collaboration:** The organization provides services in-house or identifies community providers and referral agencies that have experience delivering evidence-based trauma services.
- **Engagement and Involvement:** Youth and/or family have the opportunity to provide feedback to the organization on quality improvement processes for better engagement and services.

CLINICAL PRACTICES

- **Establish safety.**
- **Normalize symptoms,** youth with traumatic stress symptoms need to know that their symptoms are not unique and that their reactions are common to their experience(s).
- **Actively involve** youth and families in the treatment planning process.
- **Screen** and when necessary, assess for trauma-related symptoms and disorders in youth with histories of trauma.
- **Prevent retraumatization** generated by intervention and treatment practices and policies.
- **Train** all staff and volunteers in trauma-specific treatments.
- **Engage** referral sources and partner organizations.
- **Implement** youth-centered communication skills.
- **Collaboration and understanding** of professional roles.
- **Understanding** you own history
- Understanding **culture-specific** and **gender-specific** symptoms and syndromes and responsive services.
- Offer trauma-informed **peer support.**
- Identify and manage **trauma-related triggers.**
- Monitor and facilitate **stability.**
- Foster youth and family **engagement.**

RESOURCES

[TIP 57 Trauma-Informed Care in Behavioral Health Services \(samhsa.gov\)](https://www.samhsa.gov/trauma-informed-care)

[SAMHSA's Concept of Trauma and Guidance for a Trauma-Informed Approach](https://www.samhsa.gov/trauma-informed-care)